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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CRS,
NSC FOR WOOD
OSD FOR SHIVERS
CENTCOM FOR CG CSTC-A, CG CJTF-82, POLAD

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL PGOV AF
SUBJECT: HEZBI-ISLAMI RECRUITING

REF: 07 Kabul 4179

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Over the past two months, members of Hezbi-Islami-Afghanistan's (HIA) Executive Committee have visited provincial officials and party faithful in Kunduz and Laghman provinces to discuss plans for the region. In meetings with the PRTs they claimed that provincial officials (including the governors) had "welcomed" their presence. HIA representatives claimed that they had registered as an official political party in Laghman and opened an office in Mehtarlam, Laghman's provincial capital. Further north, HIA is considering establishing party shuras (councils) in Kunduz, Takhar and Baghlan. HIA representatives affirmed their support for a democratic government in accordance with the Afghanistan constitution and disavowed any current contact with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Endorsing conflict resolution through peaceful means, representatives stated that "war cannot finish a war" and urged a political accommodation with the insurgents. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (SBU) Over the last two months HIA Executive Committee Members Mawlawi Janbaz Sarferaz, Head of Recruitment, and Sayed Rahman from Logar Province, accompanied by local party members, called on PRTs Mehtarlam (Laghman Province) and Kunduz to introduce themselves. In each province they also met with the Governor, the local chief of the National Directorate for Security, and the police chief to discuss their activities. They asserted to the PRTs that local officials in both provinces had welcomed them to their provinces and "supported" their work. The purpose of their visits was to meet with party members and to organize a formal party structure in preparation for the 2009 presidential elections. Depending on interest in the provinces, HIA may establish an office (existing offices are in Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar and Nimroz) or a shura (existing shuras are in Laghman, Khost, Badghis and Ghor).

¶13. (SBU) Sarferaz presented HIA as a legitimate political party seeking to mobilize and organize its base. He affirmed the party's support for a democratic government in accordance with the Afghanistan constitution. He expected the party's lack of discrimination and anti-corruption stance to appeal to the population, especially the youth. However, when pressed on the question, it was difficult for him to outline a compelling party platform other than a simple statement on peace and reconstruction based on Islam.

¶14. (SBU) Sarferaz stated that HIA was in a unique position to work with the insurgents and bring them into the government. He planned

to stress to the party faithful the pacific nature of the party and encourage them to support reconstruction efforts. Sarferaz admitted that HIA faced an uphill struggle convincing ordinary Afghans that the group supports the government. He stressed to both PRTs that HIA had severed ties with Hekmatyar and the military wing of the party. When asked whether Hekmatyar supported suicide attacks, he claimed that while Hekmatyar had been against them, he did not know Hekmatyar's current stance.

WOOD